

Black Youth Identity Development: Using the Black Lives Matter Movement as a Wake-Up Call
for Improved Cultural Attunement for Non-Black Human Service Workers

Thesis Draft

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INTRODUCTION

Human services is a field of study to provide a variety of aid to various peoples and right the injustices that exist when human rights are violated. Human service workers have historically been one of the biggest human rights advocates, but many believe in the 21st century this no longer rings true. On top of the lack of advocacy today, the internet has become a safe space to share personal thoughts and ideas including the idea that human rights have not properly been implemented into human service theory and practice. This exposure is in part due to the rise of technology being used constantly in daily life. With the consistent usage of technology comes quick communication with people worldwide through social media platforms or specific communication apps. Many companies and organizations take advantage of technology and use it to advertise their products or upcoming artists, but others use technology to share personal stories and opinions about the way the world works. This can include speaking on how one wants more benches in their neighborhood versus coordinating a sit-in for a social movement in a specific location. Social movements have needed to take advantage of what their time period offers to be successful as a movement. Before, the most successful tactic to share news about a movement was word of mouth, but today technology has allowed us to share news and information in seconds across the globe and this new form of activism is referred to as “cyberactivism” (Castaneda, E., & Fennelly, M., 2020).

It is important to note that social movements, historically, have helped human service workers, more specifically social workers, see the wrongdoings of society and act upon them through advocacy and now with technology, professionals from all over the world can see what people think of their services. One of the social movements taking advantage of cyber activism is the Black Lives Matter movement. Media and stories are being shared across the globe about the

daily racist acts against Black people in the United States and the most prominent shares are about police brutality. In the United States, our country is a melting pot of cultures with a projection that the United States will become “a more racially and ethnically pluralistic society” (Census Bureau, 2020), those within the human services field must be culturally attuned. The definition that will be consistent with the conversation here will be that cultural attunement is a way to be in relation with “other,” (M.L. Holskins, 1999). Some of the many ways that expose the need for cultural attunement within the field of human services are through social movements. Although it has been established for years, in the past year, the names and voices of the Black lives taken from us due to police violence have been louder than ever. With the increasing use of technology for the iGeneration (people born anytime from 1995 to 2012), youth are also being exposed to racial violence through the usage of technology (Albert-Duncan, G., 2005) at young ages. The exposure to racial violence or overall racial wrongdoings can and will result in a struggle of double-consciousness, or the experience [of a Black person] to see themselves through the eyes of others; being two separate beings “an American and a Negro,” (W.E.B. du Bois, 1903). For human service workers who do not identify as Black, it is in their best interest to become culturally attuned to connect with their service participants and allow them to feel safe and comfortable speaking to them, be open-minded, and culturally conscious regardless of racial background.

BLACK LIVES MATTER

The Black Lives Matter movement was created in 2013 as a result of the acquittal of Trayvon Martin’s murderer George Zimmerman, and the movement has continued due to the blatant prejudice against Black lives (Rickford, R., 2016). Last year, around 164 Black people were killed by police officers in the United States in the first three months of 2020 (Mapping

Police Violence, 2020) during a global pandemic. There were many videos of the murders spreading through social media and being exposed to people of all ages, as a form of cyberactivism, to show that the injustices happening specifically to Black people were real and happened often (Castaneda, E., & Fennelly, M., 2020). For many Black youths, these images and comments have been the first time they witnessed clear acts of racism and how some people view the Black community (Leath, S., et al., 2019). Some may say that this allows them to develop a critical consciousness (Sullivan, J., & Platenburg, G., 2017), critical consciousness being defined as awareness of how institutional, historical, and systemic forces limit and promote the life opportunities from specific groups (Ginwright, S. & Cammarota, J., 2002). Yet, it has been proved that these visuals of death, especially the death of those who look like you/are in a similar community, will cause one to suffer severe emotional and cognitive problems as well as have difficulty in making and/or sustaining positive relationships and negatively affect your self-worth and self-identity, (Douglass-Bremmer, 2006). A theory had been developed a year prior to Douglass-Bremmer's piece over this idea specifically for those within the African diaspora, referred to as "post-traumatic slave syndrome". This theory was coined by Dr. Joy DeGruy and it refers to the multigenerational trauma that the African diaspora suffers from due to "300 years of trauma (slavery), no help (aid in any capacity), freed, no help, more trauma," (AJ+, 2019). She says that those of the African diaspora being freed from chattel slavery meant nothing in terms of the trauma they suffered and that Black people continue to suffer due to white supremacy and institutionalized racism. The Black Lives Matter movement exposes this as well and uses their platform as a current part of pop culture to their advantage.

In order to understand the struggles of Black people today, one needs to understand the struggles of Black ancestors. Their struggle had manifested itself in various forms such as

identity crises, generational trauma, post-traumatic slave disorder, financial gaps, and much more (Carten A., 2015). There is a reason that no matter how successful a Black person in America gets, all-white society sees is a Black person, and there is a reason Black people risked their health in the streets with Black Lives Matter protests during a pandemic rather than quarantining in their homes. Racism is so deeply rooted in our society that sometimes racist objects or portrayals seem normal. For example, Aunt Jemima's Syrup is a well-known and popular syrup brand in the United States, but Aunt Jemima is a racist stereotype of Black slave women referred to as "mammy's" or even Uncle Ben's rice which was a racist racist representation on house slaves (Benkhen, B., & Smithers, D. 2015). Both of these companies have stated on their official websites that due to the murder of George Floyd in May of 2020 as well as civil unrest from the Black Lives Matter movement, they had decided to rebrand their products to show they stood with the movement (Aunt Jemima, 2020 & Ben's Original 2020). For popular companies to make changes such as these are huge because there will be generations of people that have never known Aunt Jemima's Syrup or Uncle Ben's Rice, and more importantly there will be generations of Black children that won't be subject to racist stereotypes or portrayals when eating breakfast or dinner (Benkhen, B., & Smithers, D. 2015). These changes were able to occur because of the Black Lives Matter movement, but there is still much more work to be done with how Black people are portrayed in the media. In popular media, there have been a handful of positive Black portrayals that could be seen in shows such as "Tyler Perry's House of Payne.... Which positively influenced three dimensions of Black identity including closeness to Blacks, Black separatism, and the belief in positive stereotypes about Blacks," (Sullivan, J., & Platenburg, G., 2017). A show such as this can also help develop the critical consciousness of Black youth in a positive way, but there are also many Black stereotypes such as the "sassy or

angry Black woman”, the “domestic Black help”, the “scary Black man”, or the “thug” (Benkhen, B., & Smithers, D. 2015). When these stereotypes are displayed to youth often, they cause non-Black youth to develop stereotypes of Black people and Black youth to question what they believe a Black person does/looks like and how they believe society thinks they should act/look like (Albert-Duncan, G., 2005), along with the fact that Black media has statistically proven to influence Black identity development (Sullivan, J., & Platenburg, G., 2017), then comes the double consciousness conundrum. Yet, instead of the fight between being American or Negro (du Bois), it has evolved into the fight between being white or Black; society created stereotypical archetypes for each race and being too much of one side than another, as a Black person, causes issues for you with both races. Especially in recent times with the uproar of police brutality in the last year, Black youth have been exposed to atrocities via social media which has forced them into a struggle of their own identity. If the world doesn’t like them for who they are, who should they be? (Sullivan J., & Platenburg G., 2017). If you begin to incorporate other elements into a developing Black youth’s journey such as their gender and/or sexuality, the spiral of an identity crisis grows more complicated (Sullivan, J., & Platenburg, G., 2017) which is where human service workers who specialize in youth services come into play.

BLACK YOUTH IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

General youth services include youth development and a piece of that includes identity development (Division of Youth Services, n.d.). With youth development models, many of them are traditionally “monocultural, middle-class, and assimilationist and has assumed that North American norms are standard,” (James, Carl E., 1996). Yet there are many parts of your identity that do not fall under these categories, and to promote these categories promotes white supremacy. As a youth, there is much to explore and these parts intersect in multiple ways which

is a conversation Kimberlé Crenshaw, a civil rights advocate and professor of Law, explores in her TED Talk “The urgency of intersectionality”. She guides this conversation by speaking about the deaths of Black men at the hands of the police then speaks on the women who were killed the same way and poses the question, “why do we not know their stories?” Last year (2020), there were many conversations about the organization Black Lives Matter. The organization as a whole is meant to encompass ALL Black lives; disabled Black lives, Trans Black lives, Queer Black lives, and more, but at times the organization did not emphasize ALL Black lives and prioritized straight, Black, cis-male lives (Rickford, 2016) which became a repetitive issue over the years. Kimberlé Crenshaw points this out in her TED Talk as well when sharing how through cyber activism #SayHerName came about to speak about the Black women who were also murdered at the hands of police officers. Crenshaw answers the question she originally posed by saying it was due to the intersectionality of being Black and being a woman. Intersectionality is a road of conflict among your intersecting identities (TED, 2016).

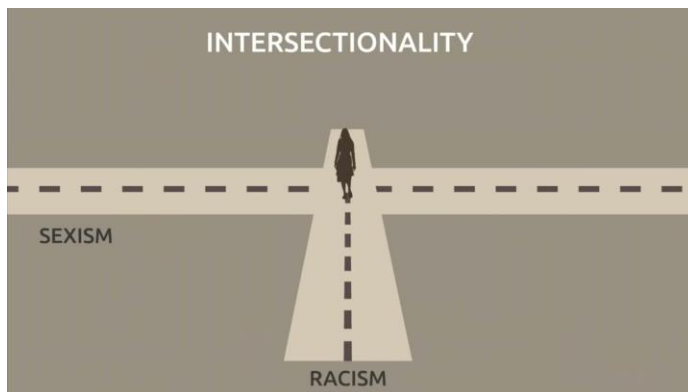


Figure 1: Intersectionality Map by Kimberlé Crenshaw

With Crenshaw’s thoughts in mind, one would surmise that, for example, those who live as a Black, transgender lesbian woman, suffer from discrimination and bias from multiple roads; sexism, racism, transphobia, and homophobia. These are only a couple of roads that could present themselves in one’s life, but there is also a person’s class, ethnicity, (dis)ability, etc.

(TED, 2016). Intersectionality allows us to be unique individuals by compiling multiple parts of a being into a single person, but it can also have negative effects when you are part of a commonly marginalized group.

Last year, the Black Lives Matter movement depended heavily on the usage of social media to organize protests, sit-ins, get emergency information to protestors, and share media of violence against protestors or Black people in general (Castaneda, E., & Fennelly, M., 2020). Since the conversation about Black Lives Matter not standing for ALL Black people had resurfaced on the internet, Black youth being exposed to Black Lives Matter as a whole were then going through one of the first realization moments in terms of intersectionality; being disliked due to your race was only one piece of the discrimination puzzle (Castaneda, E., & Fennelly, M., 2020). For example, the death of many Black Trans women had been swept under the rug, but the death of many Black cisgender men's names and photos had been spread all over social media (Castaneda, E., & Fennelly, M., 2020). Along with the countless Black bodies being seen by youth, understanding the concept of intersectionality and realizing how one can be hated for merely existing unapologetically will also take a mental toll on a Black youth (Albert-Duncan, G., 2005) which continues to further push the need to be aware of the daily external and internal struggles of the Black community in order to better understand and serve in terms of youth development for Black youth service participants.

William E. Cross, a psychologist who specializes in ethnic identity development (more specifically, Black identity development), had developed the "theory of nigrescence". This theory refers to the process of becoming Black and is referenced often when creating specific Black identity development models which Cross advocated for greatly due to "the negative effects of Western thought and science on the psychology of Black Americans, specifically the

need for psychological liberation under conditions of oppression,” (Afiya, A., 2019). In a podcast with Dr. Cross, Cross argues that it is essential to have Black-specific identity models due to the deep-rooted racism and unique experiences of the Black community, but it is important to note that many current Black identity models uphold white supremacy (Albert-Duncan, G., 2005). Black youth identity models are essential to healthy identity development, but understanding how to base an effective model is complicated. One example of a model is found in “Black Youth, Identity, and Ethics” by Albert-Duncan, Duncan explores the theory of nigrescence and the pre-encounter, encounter, and post-encounter stages proposed by William E. Cross. The pre-encounter stage refers to Black individuals identifying with “the dominant white culture, and in some instances, expressing contempt for black culture. This stage has poor conception of what it means to be Black,” (Albert-Duncan, G., 2005, p.7). One would then move to the second stage once they have encountered a situation that forces them to question race within society as well as reassess their own status as a Black person in America which Duncan says can result in double consciousness. This is a “transitional period in which individuals may opt to reassert their identification with the white culture.... Such encounters could be confrontational.... Individuals may resort to uncritically accepting everything associated with Black culture and repudiating all institutions and values associated with the dominant culture,” (Albert-Duncan, G., 2005, p. 7). W.E.B. du Bois refers to the encounter stage in his book *The Souls of Black Folk*, “It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others and measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in an amused contempt,” (du Bois, chapter I). Some stay within this encounter stage, but many will transition to the third stage referred to as post-encounter. This stage refers to those who come to terms with their primary culture without rejecting the dominant culture and develop their own

definition of what being Black means to them. W.E.B du Bois also touches on this concept as well, “He would not bleach his Negro soul in a flood of white Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world,” (Du Bois, W.E.B., 1903, chapter I).

These three stages have been developed in a way that does not uplift white supremacy, but “black identity models often rely on questionable philosophical premises that limit their power,” (Albert-Duncan, G., 2005, p. 9). These models include problem/prevention models as well as positive youth development models. These models are problematic because they use the idea of “respectability”. Respect itself is a problematic term, “because it implies judgments and approval rather than total acceptance,” (Zukav, 1998 as cited in Hoskins, M.L., 1999) Rather than respect, reverence should be the goal. This idea will be explored in the following section. which leads into the realm of respectability politics. If we attempt to incorporate the idea of respectability politics into youth development, Black youth begin to separate themselves from members of the Black community who do not adhere to the standards or expectations white America has of Black people. These standards and expectations refer to making “respectable young person” synonymous with “adhering to white culture, white dynamics/interactions, etc.” (James, C., 1996).

It is also important to stop the promotion and usage of models such as these because they require Black youth to change and assimilate to white society rather than realizing that the oppressive environment around them should change. Following along with the latter statement, these models, especially the problem/solution models, do not promote the conversation of youth assets and promote youth problems. Many professionals across fields attempt to uplift Black youth by pushing agendas of Black elitism which refers to the few Black people who were able to “get out” of their situations and break barriers to become famous celebrities, professional

athletes, or even the President of the United States. “Dominant conceptions of race relations posit the visibility of Black elites as critical indexes of progress. Such measures obscure both the persistence of systemic racism and the extent to which racialized practices have fueled the explosive growth of the carceral state,” (Rickford, R., 2016). This quote hints at the concept of the Talented Tenth which is a term coined by W.E.B. du Bois which refers to the one in ten Black men that are able to be leaders within the community (du Bois, W.E.B., 1903), but the true issue of the Talented Tenth is that they are the Black elites that do not live the same lives as the rest of the Black community. Many who become elites assimilate into the routine of white culture and in some ways continue to oppress the Black community by agreeing with the ‘pull yourself up by your bootstraps’ mentality even if they themselves didn’t do the same, (Boxill, B. 1997). These Black elites will speak and do whatever necessary to keep the white community who pays them/around them satisfied rather than publicly noting the institutionalized racism and oppression that keeps the Black community from advancing in society the way their white counterparts get to do so easily (Boxill, B., 1997). If youth development would center itself around youth assets, they would be able to better understand and prioritize emotional health, empowerment, and exploration which is why positive youth development models can be helpful, but these models still do not account for the social forces that affect Black youth (Ginwright, S., & Cammarota, J., 2002). There needs to be a level of cultural understanding and open-mindedness to understand more when serving Black youth service participants.

HUMAN RIGHTS AND HUMAN SERVICES

Out of the sources analyzed in reference to human rights and human services, all of them state that human service workers are NOT equipped to properly aid Black youth (James, C., 1996, Ginwright, S., & Cammarota, J. 2002, Ginwright, S., Cammarota, J., & Noguera, P. 2005,

Pinckney IV, H., et al. 2007, Schiele, J. 2007, Mitchell, J., & Lynch, R., 2003, Blitz L., 2014, and Steen, et al., 2017). This is due to the lack of human rights being properly implemented into theory and practice. According to the International Federation of Social Workers who developed their Statement of Ethical Principles, human rights are very vaguely spoken of and not directly named, but it has been integrated into the document. This document “calls on social workers to “uphold and defend” the human rights of clients.... Many of the concepts within the Code of Ethics derive from human rights philosophy,” (Steen, J. et al., 2017). Although human rights are meant to be upheld, “social workers seem to be ill-equipped and disinclined to engage the vital social and economic battles of the 21st century,” (Figuera-McDonough, 1993; Gil, 1998; National Association of Social Workers, 1999; Specht & Courtney, 1994 as cited in Steen, J. et al, 2017). Human service workers are, as stated early, historically meant to be advocates, but that advocacy has been very nonexistent in the 21st century. “Some commentators have questioned whether the profession has simply lost interest in social and economic justice agendas (Specht & Courtney, 1994), others have questioned whether the profession has—advertently or inadvertently—adopted the stereotypes of oppression and therefore, further institutionalized oppression,” (Spickard, Fong & Ewalt, 1995; Mitchell 1999; Van Soest & Bryant, 1995 as cited in Mitchell & Lynch, 2003). The nonexistence of proper human rights implementation and advocacy results in the lack of skills to properly aid Black youth service participants due to Black youth experiencing violations to their rights by merely existing such as the right to life (Mitchell, 2003 & James, 1996). To clarify, it is important to consider human rights when thinking about Black youth identity development due to factors such as institutionalized racism because our society profits off of Black oppression (Ginwright, S., & Cammarota, J. 2002).

When considering, “where do we go from here?” in terms of how one aids a Black youth service participant in the most effective way possible, we must look at how human rights are incorporated at various agencies and organizations as well as whether or not these agencies and their staff practice cultural attunement. Due to the advocacy and human rights implementation in question in the human services field, Jane McPherson and Neil Abell developed the “Human Rights Exposure in Social Work” scale. This scale is meant to be a questionnaire to social workers at various agencies to see if the workers themselves grasp what human rights violations look like as well as if their agency understands that as a whole and does something about it.

| These 11 items explore the HUMAN RIGHTS LENS in social work. Please tell us your views of your work, your clients, and the society we all live in. If you don't currently have an active social work practice, please answer these questions based on your views of social work clients generally, clients you have had in the past, or those you might have in the future. Please answer with your true thoughts, beliefs, and opinions according to the following scale: | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|--|-------------------|----------------------------|----------------|-------|----------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Slightly Disagree | Neither Agree nor Disagree | Slightly Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree | | | | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | | | | | |
| Please answer these questions thinking, IN MY VIEW: | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | Hunger at the community level stems from the government's failure to protect people's human right to food. | | | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 2 | If the human right to housing were protected, many fewer people would be homeless. | | | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 3 | Lack of access to medical care is a human rights violation. | | | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 4 | Poverty is a violation of the human right to a decent standard of living. | | | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 5 | A community's lack of adequate employment is not a human rights issue. | | | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 6 | Unequal access to goods and services in society is a human rights issue. | | | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 7 | It is common for U.S. social work clients to experience violations of their human rights. | | | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 8 | Clients' needs are often related to violations of one of their human rights. | | | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 9 | When I look at my clients, I see rights violations where others may see failure or pathology. | | | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 10 | Clients generally need social services because their human rights have been violated. | | | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 11 | The problems I address in my social work practice tend to be violations of my clients' human rights. | | | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

Figure 2. McPherson and Abell Human Rights Exposure in

Social Work Scale (2012)

The McPherson and Abell scale is one way to examine and ensure that human rights are being implemented and practiced in an agency or organization, but another way is by developing theories, frameworks, and ideals that work for Black youth. An example includes the human rights framework through a social justice approach to human services formulated by Shawn Ginwright and Julio Cammarota. The general human rights framework refers to country-specific

rights as well as international human rights that are a binding set of principles for governments to follow (Human Rights Framework, 2015). Many of these rights can be found in various Conventions and Declarations from the United Nations such as the Declaration of Social Progress and Development or the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity. Ginwright and Cammarota propose a social justice approach to youth development due to the fact that “current youth development models are bound by the inability to examine complex social, economic, and political forces on urban (youth of color) youth,” (Ginwright, S. & Cammarota, J. 2002, p. 82). This approach pays specific attention to the relationship between critical consciousness and social action and Ginwright & Cammarota say that it is necessary to nurture that relationship through promoting the praxis of it among urban youth. In order to promote it, they propose three levels of awareness that must be achieved: self-awareness, social awareness, and global awareness which the authors believe will promote cultural healing.

By considering the collaboration among proper United Nations human rights framework implementation, the McPherson and Abell Human Rights in Social Work model, and the Ginwright and Cammarota social justice approach, one is able to “understand the social context to look beyond the problem-driven and asset-driven assumptions about youth behaviors.... Allows us to examine their supports, opportunities, and risks circumscribed by their larger political, economic, and social forces,” (Ginwright, S., & Cammarota, J. 2002) and thus reaching a level of cultural attunement that is necessary to aid Black youth development.

HUMAN SERVICES AND CULTURAL ATTUNEMENT

In the 1990s, it was noted that there was a growing ethnic population, and today this statement continues to ring true. The projection of ethnically diverse people from 2012-2060 is

growing (Census Bureau, 2020) and with that fact, experts across professions need to begin to analyze the fact that North American society profits off of the oppression of people of color (Ginwright, S., & Cammarota, J. 2002). By analyzing how each institution promotes white supremacy and the oppression of people of color, one can then piece together how to create change within that institution. For the human services field, this research has begun to lay out only a handful of the problems within the field, but the field can use the current climate (Black Lives Matter being a prominent movement as well as pop culture) as a justification for change although there is no need for justification regardless. One step the human services field can take towards progress is by becoming culturally attuned. Cultural attunement is an idea developed by Indigenous cultures that produced the Circle of Courage model of youth development. The Circle of Courage displays an asset centered model of youth development by prioritizing four key pieces to development: mastery, generosity, independence, and belonging. The Indigenous peoples had also introduced cultural attunement. This idea being incorporated into youth development models is essential, and one can see that when thinking about the purpose in introducing the social justice approach. To repeat, the social justice approach is introduced because of the need to aid urban youth and in order to properly aid them we need to understand their cultural dynamics and how their communities function otherwise there will be cultural malpractice (Hoskins, M.L., 1999). “Not all Blacks have the same experience... It is naive to think that culture can be read off the surface without taking into consideration the personal meanings that each individual makes regarding his or her ethnicity,” (Lather 1991 as cited in Hoskins, M.L., 1999).



Figure 3. Circle of Courage, Indigenous Youth Development Model

Model

Everyone has a cultural background and our own experiences within that culture, which is an important part of cultural attunement; understanding everyone has their own personal experiences within a culture and community. To be culturally attuned is a difficult process because it means throwing away your own assumptions and ideas of how certain cultures and the people within them are as well each person you meet comes with a unique set of dilemmas and assets. Although this is an ongoing, lifelong process there are a handful of steps to take to begin the process: 1.) Acknowledging the Pain of Oppression 2.) Engaging in Acts of Humility 3.) Acting with Reverence 4.) Engaging in Mutuality 5.) Coming from a Place of “Not Knowing” (Hoskins, M.L., 1999).

1. Acknowledging the Pain of Oppression: It is crucial that those from dominant cultures “own up to the collusion in the oppression of others”, (Hoskins, M.L., 1999, p.78).

Without acknowledging, it is difficult to change oppressive tendencies. Exploring post-traumatic slave syndrome and understanding what that looks like in modern day would be helpful here.

2. Engaging in Acts of Humility: In order to achieve this, one would need to de-center themselves, especially those that are “used to being represented, rewarded, and supported

by the dominant worldview. One needs to surrender their cultural perspectives, biases, and expectations for 'correct behavior' (Hoskins, M.L., 1999, p. 79).

3. Acting with Reverence: Normally, in diversity education, people are told to have 'respect for other cultures', but as stated earlier, respect is a problematic word and implies judgement and approval instead of acceptance. With cultural attunement, use reverence instead. "To revere someone is to enter into a relationship with awe and a feeling of honor for another person... Reverence requires a person to think, act, and listen from the heart," (Hoskins, M.L., 1999, p. 80).
4. Engaging in Mutuality: This will happen when two people can share a common experience, finding similarities with another person allows a relationship and overall connection to be developed easier. Finding a sense of community is a piece of feeling mutuality especially for people of color.
5. Coming from a Place of "Not Knowing": Cultural competence is often used, but it can also be a problematic term because one cannot be proficient in knowing a culture as all experiences are different. In this stage, it is important to build bridges rather than walls to "connect diverse worlds that cannot be learned... it is an all encompassing way of being that comes from an ethic of care, of cultural attunement," (Hoskins, M.L., 1999, p. 82).

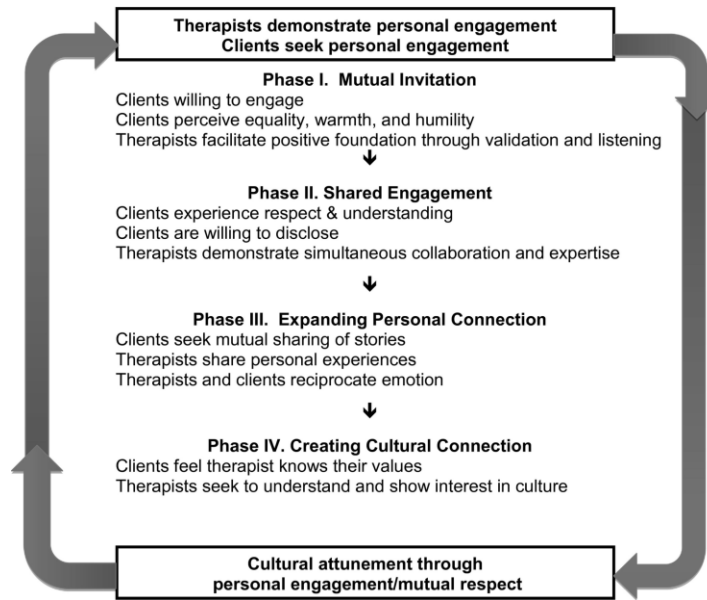


Figure 4. Marco A. Elias-Juarez & Carmen Knudson-

Martin Cultural Attunement Process

Cultural attunement is not meant to only be used within youth development work, cultural attunement is meant to be used across all disciplines. Figure 4 below displays a cultural attunement model used within therapy settings in order to continue with the 5 step process even in an alternative setting. Although cultural attunement is a huge step in the right direction, it is not enough. What must come next is anti-racism.

CULTURAL ATTUNEMENT AND ANTI-RACISM

The main focus of this research is human service workers becoming more culturally attuned, there is a clear need for more than that. Racism and oppression are necessary for the function of our society (AJ+, 2019, & Albert-Duncan, G., 2005), and exposing the racism that is in identity development is only displaying a small piece of the racism and oppression. When considering further research, it is in the best interest of the human services field to be anti-racist. In the video, “Moving From Cultural Competence to Anti-Racism” by Dr. Therma Bryant-Davis, she explores shifting to anti-racism. She says that when looking for a therapist, you should ask,

‘what are your thoughts on the impact of racism on mental health?’ and if the response is that ‘people are people’ they are not someone who will be able to properly care for you. Non-black people can be anti-racist, and it requires “releasing defensiveness, consider what the service participant is saying and what it might be like to have that experience” (NICABM, 2020).

Through the Black Lives Matter movement, they have emphasized the necessity for anti-racism in all fields in order for Black people to feel comfortable in all settings,” (Rickford, R., 2016).

Dr. Davis also emphasized that a white, anti-racist therapist will be able to properly aid and comprehend their service participants struggles regardless of what they are if they choose the role of advocacy and practice what they preach as an anti-racist professional. Even if you do not fully understand what it is like to be in their shoes, if one is able to be open to trying to understand and being able to put their own biases aside, they can be anti-racist. “The impact of racism itself, independent of poverty, still appears to exact a toll on the minds and bodies of the descendents of men and women brought to this continent as slaves....For youth in urban environments, social forces such as racism impede productive development,” (Ginwright, S., & Cammarota, J., 2002, p.86).

The next steps to become anti-racist for the human services field include, for example, revamping the curriculum provided to those pursuing the field as well as the education given to those already in the field (seminars, training, etc.) which is briefly discussed within chapter 3 of Carl E. James’ book *Perspectives on Racism and the Human Services Sector: A Case for Change*. James claims that when students are presented with anti-racist materials, many of them felt the need to prove that they were not racist and grew incredibly defensive. Ethnic studies and anti-racism are not implemented into many education systems and are seen as elective courses or unnecessary courses. “Social work continues to train people, implicitly and explicitly, for

effective practice with white, middle, and upper-class clients born in North America... Students may choose to work only with people like themselves,” (James, Carl E., 1996, p. 150-151).

Within education, James also points out that the education reflects who funds the institution; white, high middle class peoples. If the education changes, the funding stops. This forces anti-racist studies to be placed into elective courses or something that one would have to actively pursue outside of the classroom. Since the models and theories being taught are ingrained with racism, our human services workers are intentionally/unintentionally promoting racism, and thus Black service participants do not want to receive their services. Not wanting to receive services has put Black people into labels as “difficult clients, or resistant to help” rather than understanding that the services do not serve them (Blitz, L., et al., 2014).

CONCLUSION

When considering youth development, it is essential to differentiate between non-Black youth and Black youth. Black youth may be struggling in other departments with family, addictions, homelessness, etc. but it is also essential to keep in mind that they are also Black which instantly puts targets on their back literally and figuratively due to institutionalized racism and the white supremacy so deeply rooted in our society. This is why using a human rights framework is significant to understanding and aiding Black youth development. Human service workers are historically human rights advocates, so this is a part of the work that they do.

Although, it has been proven that much human service work, specifically social work, advocacy has been decreasing as the years have gone on which in turn has a negative impact on the Black service participants. Today, there is a significant rise in technology that has allowed people from all over the world to explore new ideas and ways of thinking. This includes a rise in social movements since the usage of social media and communication services has allowed movements

to inform the world about their existence, what they stand for and do, as well as gain recruitment and organize protests or sit-ins. Technology has had its pros and cons with youth; they have resources at the tip of their fingers, but they are also exposed to a handful of relatively negative visuals and information. With social movements such as Black Lives Matter on the rise, technology has allowed youth to learn about social movements and visually witness protests and positive happenings due to the movement such as racist name changes, but it also has provided negative exposure to youth as well. As a tactic for accountability, many people spread videos and photos of Black bodies, of racist encounters, and worse. Witnessing the deaths of people who could be your family, who look just like you, takes a toll on your mental health and continues to fuel the post traumatic slave disorder effect already on Black people today.

Keeping all of this in mind, youth service workers need to find ways to positively aid the development of Black youth. There are many youth development models that already exist, but many have proved that these models are based off of racist ideology. In turn, this is why experts have introduced theories and models that take social, political, and economic effects on youth into perspective such as the social justice approach to youth development and cultural attunement. Understanding that Black youth live quite differently than others is the first step, but choosing to educate oneself on why that is is another. Human service workers must reclaim their role as human rights advocates, and this current political climate is the perfect reason to do so. Many other organizations and companies have proven to stand by the Black community and acknowledge their part in oppressing the community while also having the goal to do better. Human service professionals can do the same and that is by first becoming culturally attuned, then piece by piece, human service professionals can redesign their models and theories in order to ensure they no longer promote racist ideology. The profession itself may be ingrained with

racism, as most things are, but in order to properly aid Black service participants, anti-racism must be the goal with cultural attunement being a pit stop.

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